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MILITARY PERSONNEL

DOD Has Processes for Operating and Managing Its Sexual Assault Incident Database

Why GAO Did This Study

GAO has reported that DOD has not collected uniform data on sexual assaults involving members of the armed forces. In 2008, Congress required DOD to implement a centralized, case-level database for the collection and maintenance of these data. In 2012, DSAID reached initial operational capability to capture sexual assault data. House Report 112-479 included a provision for GAO to review DSAID no sooner than 1 year after it was certified compliant with DOD standards by the Secretary of Defense.

This report (1) describes the current status of DOD's implementation of DSAID and steps DOD has taken to help standardize DSAID's use, (2) assesses any technical challenges DSAID's users have identified and any DOD plans to address those challenges, and (3) assesses the extent to which DOD's change management process for modifying DSAID aligns with information technology and project management industry standards.

GAO reviewed DOD documents, and interviewed DOD program officials as well as DSAID users. Specifically, GAO conducted site visits to 9 military installations and met with 42 DSAID users. Views obtained are nongeneralizable. Installations were selected based on their use of DSAID, number of users, geographic diversity, and other factors.

GAO is not making recommendations in this report. DOD provided technical comments, which GAO incorporated as appropriate.

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What GAO Found

As of October 2013, the Department of Defense's (DOD) Defense Sexual Assault Incident Database (DSAID) was fully implemented and in use across the military services, and DOD had taken several steps to standardize DSAID's use throughout the department. Sexual assault incident data are input into DSAID through both manual and automated data entry processes and include, as applicable, victim and referral support information, investigative and incident information, and case outcome data for certain incidents of sexual assault that involve a servicemember. Additionally, in some instances DSAID includes sexual assault cases involving a servicemember spouse, an adult family member, and DOD civilians and contractors. Further, DOD has taken several steps to standardize DSAID's use through the development of (1) policies, processes, and procedures for using the system; (2) training for system users; and (3) processes for monitoring the completeness of data.

DSAID users have identified technical challenges with the system and DOD officials stated that they have plans to spend approximately \$8.5 million to implement modifications to DSAID that address most of these challenges in fiscal years 2017 and 2018. Some of the key technical challenges users have identified experiencing with the system relate to DSAID's system speed and ease of use; interfaces with other external DOD databases; and users' ability to query data and generate reports. DOD has plans in place to implement modifications to DSAID that are expected to alleviate these challenges; however, officials stated that they will not be approved to fund these modifications until they have conducted an analysis of alternatives that is in line with DOD's acquisition policy framework. This framework, as well as the GAO *Cost Estimating and Assessment Guide*, outline key elements of this analysis, such as relative lifecycle costs and benefits and the effect and value of cost and schedule, among others. Conducting an analysis of alternatives including these elements is key to ensuring that DOD appropriately manages its modifications to DSAID. In 2010, GAO found that DOD had failed to demonstrate adherence to these key elements in the initial development and implementation of DSAID, and, DOD projects it will have spent a total of approximately \$31.5 million on implementing and maintaining DSAID through fiscal year 2018. This is approximately \$13 million more than the 2012 estimate. DOD's plan to conduct an analysis of alternatives that adequately considers key elements should position DOD to more accurately assess whether planned modifications to DSAID can be implemented within budget and result in the desired outcome.

DOD manages modifications to DSAID through its change management process, which GAO found substantially aligns with key applicable elements established in the industry standards that GAO reviewed. Specifically, DOD has established processes for managing change requests, such as developing a process to evaluate requested changes to the database and establishing a board that approves, tracks, and controls changes to the database. DOD has also established processes for configuration management, including a process to track, communicate, and deliver changes to the database.